Political Science 434: Public Policy and Metropolitan Area Governance
Spring 2016

Robert Stein
Herzstein 202

Wednesday 2-5PM
Room: TBA

Course description:

This course is a research seminar on public policy at the subnational level. Students taking this class will be expected to complete a data based research length article appropriate for submission to a scholarly journal. Students are expected to have previously completed work on their research topic (e.g., formulation of research question and appropriate data collection) sufficient to meet assignment deadliness penultimate to completing a final paper. Research papers can be completed by teams of students.

Only three class meetings will be held with the entire class. The entire class will meet January 13 from 4-5PM to discuss the class schedule and confirm and resolve class conflicts. Our weekly Wednesday meeting time will be reserved for individual students/teams to meet with me. Other days and times will be arranged with students and teams who have a conflict with the Wednesday 2-5PM meeting time. All students and student teams will be make an oral presentation of their research, including a power point during the last week of classes (April 20) and the assigned date for the class final (April 27).

Course requirements:

Dated progress papers: 25%
Power point presentation: 25%
Final research paper: 50%

Syllabus

On each date below students/teams are expected to submit written assignments.

January 20

Introduction and research statement

A clear (1-3 paragraphs) statement of the research question you are undertaking and the plan/outline of the paper. Establish how your research question advances our understanding of the phenomenon you seek to study and what are the outcomes or at least the expected outcomes advance our knowledge in this field.

January 27

Bibliography

Bibliography you will draw upon to review the literature on your research topic and any readings relevant to methodological issues related to your proposed research projects.

February 10

Literature review

Prepare a summary of the literature relevant to your research question. This review should detail what others have suggested as a theoretical explanation for your question(s) and what empirical support these and other researchers have found for their explanations. This section should include a clear state of your dependent and independent variables/concepts and how they have been studied by others. The purpose of the literature review is to setup your own research question and demonstrate how it fits within the extant literature and most importantly, why your question(s) advances our knowledge/understanding of the phenomenon under study.

February 17

Theoretical explanation and hypotheses

What is the conceptual/theoretical answer your research question? What theories/explanations in the literature do you propose to draw upon and what new approaches, concepts, theories, measures and model specification (e.g., interaction terms and mediated relationships), etc. do you propose to use in answering your research question. Again, you might draw upon the literature discussed above for this discussion.

Based on your theoretical approach identify the concepts central to your explanation, provide a definition for each concept and identify the relationships among your concepts that provide a critical test for your explanations. What are you explaining/predicting (i.e., dependent variables) and with what concepts are you explaining/predicting your dependent variables (i.e., independent variables). Identify the critical relationships and their direction that support your explanation, i.e., what are 2-3 critical hypotheses.

February 24

Research design, data and measures

Detail the unit and level of analysis at which you intend to test your hypotheses and data and measures that will be used in conducting these tests

.March 30

Preliminary findings

April 13

Draft power point presentation

April 20, 27

Class presentations

May 4

Final paper